

Message Text

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JOHN), ES
SUBJECT: ROLE OF MR. JOHN MCAWARD IN CONNECTION WITH VISIT OF
CONGRESSMAN DRINAN

REF: SAN SALVADOR 0239

1. MR. JOHN MCAWARD, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR FOR INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS OF THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST SERVICES COMMITTEE, APPEARED TO BE THE ORGANIZER OF FATHER DRINAN'S VISIT TO EL SALVADOR DURING JANUARY 7-12. INASMUCH AS HE HAS ANNOUNCED HIS INTENT TO BRING TWO MORE CONGRESSIONAL GROUPS TO THIS COUNTRY IN THE NEAR FUTURE, IT MAY BE USEFUL TO THE DEPARTMENT TO KNOW SOMETHING OF HIS GENERAL METHOD OF PROCEDURE.

2. MR. MCAWARD HAS GAINED EASY ENTREE TO CHURCH OFFICIALS AND CAMPESINO GROUPS, MANY OF WHICH CONTACTS EMBASSY OFFICIALS HELPED HIM ESTABLISH DURING HIS MONTH-LONG VISIT LAST MAY WHICH RESULTED IN HIS CRITICAL REPORT TO A CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEE LAST JULY. HE HAS BEEN ABLE TO USE THESE CONTACTS (AND HIS SPANISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY GAINED AS A PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEER IN COLOMBIA), TO PICK UP MUCH INFORMATION AND IMPRESSIONS ABOUT EL SALVADOR AND ABOUT ALLEGED VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN

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RIGHTS WHICH INDEED ADD CONSIDERABLY TO THE TOTAL PICTURE HERE.

3. MR. MCAWARD ARRIVED IN SAN SALVADOR FIVE DAYS AHEAD OF FATHER DRINAN AND SPENT THAT PERIOD VERY CAPABLY ARRANGING THE CONGRESSMAN'S PROGRAM. IN NUMEROUS MEETINGS WITH EMBASSY OFFICERS, HE IDENTIFIED OFFICIAL MEETINGS TO BE ARRANGED AND EMBASSY PERSONNEL TO ATTEND THE CONGRESSMAN'S BRIEFING.

4. MR. MCAWARD PROFERRED TO BE FAMILIAR WITH EMBASSY REPORTING ON THE SUBJECT OF HUMAN RIGHTS, CRITICIZED IT AS BEING INADEQUATE, AND ON ONE OCCASION SURPRISED EMBASSY OFFICERS BY INQUIRING ABOUT DETAILS OF A MATTER WHICH THE DEPARTMENT HAD CLASSIFIED AS CONFIDENTIAL EXDIS (BUT WHICH MAY HAVE BEEN REVEALED TO HIM BY A SALVADORAN PRIVY TO THE SUBJECT MATTER).

5. HE APPLAUDED THE HUMAN RIGHTS REPORTING OF SOME FORMER EMBASSY PERSONNEL AND EXPRESSED RELIEF AT NOT HAVING TO DEAL THIS TIME AS HE DID DURING HIS PREVIOUS VISIT WITH AN OFFICER WITH WHOSE VIEWS HE DISAGREED.

6. ALTHOUGH HE SURPRISED EMBASSY OFFICERS AT THE START OF THE WEEK BY ANNOUNCING THAT FATHER DRINAN WOULD CONCELEBRATE MASS WITH ARCHBISHOP ROMERO, AT WEEK'S END HE APPEARED TO SURPRISE FATHER DRINAN WITH THE SAME NEWS UPON THE LATTER'S ARRIVAL.

7. AFTER DISCUSSING WITH EMBASSY OFFICERS EARLY IN THE WEEK THE UNFORTUNATE OVERLAP OF FATHER DRINAN'S HUMAN RIGHTS VISIT WITH THAT OF THE INTER-AMERICAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION (IAHRC) GROUP, HE NOT ONLY DID NOT INFORM RATHER DRINAN BUT LATER PROFESSED IN FATHER DRINAN'S PRESENCE NOT TO HAVE KNOWN SUCH OVERLAP WOULD OCCUR.

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8. TO ONE EMBASSY OFFICER, MR. MCAWARD IN ADVANCE OF FATHER DRINAN'S ARRIVAL DEFINED THE PURPOSE OF THE TRIP AS BEING TO FIND MORE WAYS TO CUT OFF AID TO EL SALVADOR.

9. TO ANOTHER EMBASSY OFFICER, HE PREDICTED THAT THE EMBASSY'S MEETING WITH FATHER DRINAN WOULD BE "CONFRONTATIONAL BECAUSE HE KNOWS THAT THE STATE DEPARTMENT AND THE DEFENSE DEPARTMENT HAVE LIED TO THE CONGRESS" AND YET TO ANOTHER EMBASSY OFFICER, "BECAUSE THE EMBASSY'S REPORTING ON AND THE ASSESSMENT OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN EL SALVADOR WAS SO FAR FROM FATHER DRINAN'S IMPRESSION OF THE SITUATION." THE MEETING WITH FATHER DRINAN WAS, IN FACT, NOT CONFRONTATIONAL.

10. MR. MCAWARD, WHEN TOLD THAT PRESIDENT ROMERO'S MEETING WITH FATHER DRINAN WOULD BE ON A TUESDAY RATHER THAN MONDAY OR WEDNESDAY (WHICH MCAWARD HAD REQUESTED) AND WOULD CONFLICT WITH HIS PLANS TO TAKE FATHER DRINAN INTO THE COUNTRY-SIDE, IMMEDIATELY SAID TO CANCEL THE MEETING. (THE EMBASSY, OF COURSE, DECLINED TO DO THIS, AND MR. MCAWARD SUEQUENTLY ADJUSTED THE PROGRAM.)

11. MR. MCAWARD ALSO REQUESTED THE USE OF AN EMBASSY ROOM

IN WHICH TO CONVOKE A MEETING OF ABOUT 25 LABOR LEADERS OF WIDELY VARYING POLITICAL COMPLEXION TO GIVE THEIR VIEWS ON THE GOVERNMENT. (WHEN THE EMBASSY WAS UNALBE TO PROVIDE SPACE, THE MEETING WAS HELD AT THE ARCHBISHOPIC.)

12. MCAWARD SUGGESTED THE AGRICULTURAL ATTACHE BE ALERTED TO HIS (MCAWARD'S) NEXT VISIT TO EL SALVADOR WITH TWO CONGRESS-MEN FROM THE AGRICULTURAL COMMITTEE, WHO WOULD EXPECT THE AGRICULTURAL ATTACHE TO BE FAMILIAR WITH CAMPESINO PROBLEMS, I.E., VIOLATIONS OF THEIR HUMAN RIGHTS.

13. MCAWARD SAID HE HAD AN OFFICE IN SAN SALVADOR WHICH REPORTS TO HIM. THIS OFFICE IS IN THE ARCHBISHOPIC AND IS RUN BY A CATHOLIC PRIEST. HIS ORGANIZATION REPORTEDLY FINANCIALLY SUPPORTED OFFICIAL USE

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PORTS A CHURCH PUBLICATION. A GOVERNMENT SOURCE HAS SINCE TOLD US THAT MCAWARD HAS AN AUTOMOBILE REGISTERED IN HIS NAME WITH THE ARCHBISHOP'S PLACE AS THE ADDRESS.

14. JUDGING FROM INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO THE EMBASSY AND KNOWLEDGE THAT SECURITY FORCES ALMOST PICKED HIM UP FOR "INVOLVING HIMSELF IN INTERNAL POLITICAL AFFAIRS" AND FOR MEETING WITH WHAT THEY CONSIDER TO BE SUBVERSIVE ELEMENTS, MCAWARD IS LIKELY TO BE UNWELCOME TO SALVADORAN AUTHORITIES AT THE TIME OF HIS NEXT VISIT.

15. IN RETROSPECT, MR. MCAWARD PROVED HIMSELF A VERY SKILLFUL ORGANIZER AND IS BELIEVED TO HAVE SUCCEEDED IN ARRANGING THE OVERALL PROGRAM FOR FATHER DRINAN EXACTLY ALONG THE LINES WHICH HE DESIRED. WE ARE, OF COURSE, LOOKING FORWARD TO HIS NEXT VISIT.

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